



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Ambassador Jorge Fuentes Monzonis-Villonga, Head of the OSCE Mission in Croatia

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 15, 2006

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I would also like to thank Ambassador Fuentes for his report, and also the excellent 2006 Review Report and the helpful report on the issues that underpin the legal and property disputes that are hindering refugee returns. I would also like to thank the deputy minister from Croatia for his statement and his review of progress made by his country.

The United States agrees that Croatia has made significant progress on the issues related to the Mission's mandate, including on police reform, civil society development, and freedom of the media.

We commend the cooperation between the Mission and the Government of Croatia that has resulted in the "Platform" meeting framework, as well as agreed objectives for future work.

The 2006 report, taken together with the upcoming discussion of the 2007 program outline, raises serious issues for this Council about the drawdown of the Mission.

The report says by the end of 2006 or early 2007 the structure of the Mission could reflect a significant phasing down in the areas of policing, civil society, electoral reform, and media., but also that there is still work to be done in the areas of promoting rights of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, return and integration of refugees, war crimes trials, and strengthening institutional and legal frameworks.

The report also lays out joint objectives and specific tasks for reaching these objectives in the above-mentioned areas.

We support the work of the Mission in assisting the Government of Croatia in reaching these objectives. As work towards these objectives progresses, the United States believes it will be time to discuss the phasing down and eventual closure of the Mission.

While some issues, such as monitoring of war crimes trials, may require longer-term support, this could be done and should not be an impediment to winding down the Mission. We can find alternative follow-on structures to address such remaining issues.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.